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Mr. *Hooper's*

SERMON

ON THE

Truth and Reaſonableneſs of the
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE APOSTLES Neither IMPOSTORS nor ENTHUSIASTS.

A SERMON

On *Acts* xxvi. 25.

Preached at the West Church in *Boston*, *September* 1742.

By WILLIAM HOOPER, A. M.
Pastor of the said Church.

John xxi. 24. *This is the Disciple which testifieth of these Things, and wrote these Things: and we know that his Testimony is true.*

Matth. xi. 6. *Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

The Apoſtles neither Impoſtors nor Enthuſiaſts.

Acts XXVI. 25.

I am not mad, moſt noble Feſtus, *but ſpeak forth the Words of Truth and Soberneſs.*

MY *Brethren*; The Truth of the Chriſtian Religion is plain and certain to every ſerious and conſiderate Man. The Excellency of the Precepts and Commands of JESUS CHRIST, the Sublimity of his Doctrines, the ſpeedy Propagation of the Goſpel through the World, the exact Accompliſhment of the Propheſies of the New-Teſtament, the Miracles wrought by our bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles, and eſpecially his wonderful Reſurrection from the Dead; theſe Things are ſuch evident and undeniable Proofs of the Divinity of this Faith and Doctrine, that he who attentively conſiders them, and at the ſame Time calls JESUS CHRIST an Impoſtor, and his Religion a Fable, muſt be either very blind, or very perverſe.

Nevertheleſs

Nevertheleſs, there have been in all Ages, and there are many at this Day who disbelieve the Goſpel, and uſe all their Strength and Cunning, to ſhake and batter down the Proofs and Arguments, that ſerve to eſtabliſh it. From a pretended Regard to Truth and the Welfare of Mankind, they oppoſe and blaſpheme a Religion, the diſtinguiſhing Characteriſticks of which are *Reaſon*, *Love*, and *Beneficence*. Sundry and diverſe are the Ways they take to confirm themſelves in their Errors, and to impoſe upon and deceive ſimple and unwary-Souls.

But without mentioning any other Cauſe of Infidelity, I propoſe to conſider *that* only, which is taken from the Characters and Qualifications of the Apoſtles; as if they were not credible Witneſſes of the Facts which they relate, having neither ſufficient Knowledge nor Integrity to perſwade Belief; but were a Number of falſe and deſigning; or, of fooliſh and viſionary Men, wanting to cheat the World, and to promote their own Intereſt by telling a fabulous Story; or, looking upon their own Fancies and Dreams and Imaginations as the Inſpiration of GOD, like thoſe vain *Enthuſiaſts* that have appeared in all Ages, in all Countries, and in all Religions. With the divine Aſſiſtance I ſhall ſhew how groundleſs and unwarrantable this Objection is, and ſet before you a juſt and true Character of the Apoſtles; that you may know to give a Reaſon of the Hope that is in you, and be enabled to ſtand faſt in the Belief and Practice of the Goſpel.

And think not that a Diſcourſe of this Kind, is needleſs and in vain to an Aſſembly of Chriſtians. Indeed all of you *my Brethren*, profeſs the Chriſtian Religion, and to depend upon JESUS CHRIST as your Saviour: but notwithſtanding, I am afraid, that but few have conſidered the Grounds upon which this Religion is built, and examined and felt

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the Weight of the Arguments that ſerve to prove its Divinity. You are Chriſtians, not becauſe you have tried the Goſpel, and found it agreeable to ſound Reaſon and Underſtanding, worthy of GOD, and for the Benefit of Mankind; but becauſe you were bred and educated in this Way; or, becauſe it is agreeable to your Prejudices, and is the Faſhion and Cuſtom of the Country. But ſuch a Faith is not acceptable to GOD, who requires a *reaſonable Service*; it cannot hold out againſt the Attacks of an *Infidel*, nor ſupport you in a Time of Temptation, and enable you to bring forth the Fruits of Holineſs. We have therefore too much Cauſe frequently to repreſent to you the Evidences of the Truth of our moſt holy Faith. Beſides, the Apoſtle *John* ſays to thoſe that already believed in JESUS CHRIST, 1 Joh. 5. 13. *Theſe Things have I written to you that believe on the Name of the Son of GOD, that ye may know that ye have eternal Life, and that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God*: by which Words, he plainly intimates; that tho' Men have a rational Belief of the Truths of the Goſpel, yet it is of great Service to them often to meditate upon the Grounds of this Belief; it confirms and ſtrengthens this Principle, and makes them more diligent and active in obeying the Commands of GOD. And further, by repreſenting the Credibility of the Apoſtles, and the Nature of the Chriſtian Religion, in a full and ſhining Light; ſuch as are tinctured with *Enthuſiaſm* may, by the Influence of divine Grace, be convinced of their Folly and Extravagance, and reduced to Truth and Soberneſs: for at the ſame Time that we argue againſt *Infidels*, we have an Opportunity to expoſe the Abſurdity and Madneſs of *Enthuſiaſts*.

The Words I have read for my *Text* are a very proper Foundation for a Diſcourſe of this Kind. In order to have a clear and full Underſtanding of them,

them, it will be neceſſary to conſider their Connection with the preceeding Verſes, and to explain the ſeveral Terms of the Text. In the beginning of this Chapter, the ſacred Hiſtorian informs us, that the *Apoſtle Paul* being brought before *King Agrippa* and the *Governour Porcius Feſtus*, he was permitted to ſpeak for himſelf againſt the Accuſations of his Enemies the *Jews*. In his excellent Defence, he mentions his blameleſs and inoffenſive Life among the Jews, in whoſe Religion he had been bred up, and his having been of the ſtricteſt Sect of that Religion, *a Phariſee*, who maintained the Reſurrection of the Dead, and a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments in another Life, for the Hope of which he was called in queſtion. Then he goes on to ſay, that the *Heathens* and *Sadducees* might be prejudiced againſt this Doctrine, as incredible to the natural Reaſon of Mankind; but that no Man could think it more incredible or more falſe, than he had thought the Chriſtian Religion, *that he put the Saints in Priſon, that he perſecuted them to ſtrange Cities, that he compelled them to blaſpheme, and aſſiſted in having them put to Death*; but that GOD, amidſt all this Rage and Fury againſt his bleſſed Son and his Saints, had in an extraordinary Manner converted him, and given him the Authority and Commiſſion of an *Apoſtle*, to preach that very Goſpel which he had ſo ſeverely perſecuted; which he had done from the Time he was called to that Office, to that Day, ſaying, according to ancient Propheſies, *that CHRIST ſhould ſuffer, and that he ſhould be the firſt that ſhould riſe from the Dead, and ſhould ſhow Light unto the People, and to the Gentiles*; V. 23.

To this noble and juſt Defence, *Feſtus* makes an inſulting and paſſionate Anſwer, *Paul, thou art beſide thy ſelf: much Learning doth make thee mad.* Obſerve the Impreſſion that the Truths of the Goſpel make upon a vicious and diſorderly Mind. Inſtead

of

of examining into the Matter as would have become a juſt and impartial Judge, and a reaſonable and ſober Man, *Feſtus* full of Prejudices againſt the Doctrines and Facts related by the *Apoſtle*, not being able to reconcile them with his own pre-conceived Notions and Ways of thinking, nor caring to give himſelf the Trouble of a farther Enquiry, he pronounces *Paul a wild and diſtracted Man.* To which, the Apoſtle replied, as in the Words of our Text; *I am not mad moſt noble Feſtus; but ſpeak forth the Words of Truth and Soberneſs.*

The *Apoſtle* does not wax angry, nor ſeverely reprove the blaſphemous Speech of *Feſtus*: On the contrary he ſtill addreſſes him in honourable Terms: *Moſt noble Feſtus.* He was an arrogant and unreaſonable Man; but he was in an high Office in the State, and cloathed with great Power and Authority; therefore the *Apoſtle* treats him with the Reſpect ſuitable to his Dignity. *Give to Cæſar*, ſays our bleſſed Saviour, *the Things that are Cæſar's.* Our Apoſtle likewiſe in many Places, *commands Chriſtians to be ſubject to the higher Powers.* The Apoſtle *Peter* ſays, *Fear GOD, honour the King.* Accordingly the *Apoſtles*, perſwaded of the Neceſſity of this, for the Good of Mankind, and the Succeſs of true Religion, always behaved with Reverence to Rulers and Perſons in Authority; they reſpected their Office, they gave them their proper Titles, and anſwered with Modeſty and Humility: Looſe and abandoned Men honour even Wickedneſs and Vice, when in the Perſons of the Great and Mighty: Conceited and warm *Enthuſiaſts* under Pretence of Hatred to Sin, deſpiſe all Rule and Authority; they ſet themſelves up againſt every Thing that is called ſo. But the *Apoſtles*, at the ſame Time that they vindicated the Cauſe of Truth and Virtue, expreſſed proper Submiſſion and Honour to *higher Powers.* Nothing could be more haughty and arrogant, nothing more

weak and unbecoming a *Governour*, than this Deciſion of *Feſtus*. It was a Shame and Diſgrace to him. Nevertheleſs, the Apoſtle anſwers, *Moſt noble Feſtus.*

But the great Reſpect which the Apoſtle paid to *Feſtus*, did not make him forget the Regard he owed to himſelf and to the Cauſe he was defending. The *Governour* reflected ſeverely both upon the *Apoſtle* and his Doctrine. Inſtead of being confounded at his Greatneſs, or terrified at the Thoughts of his Reſentment, ſo as to pay him a mean and baſe Compliſance, by contradicting or ſoftening what he had ſaid, or by remaining ſilent, the *Apoſtle* replied briskly, and at the ſame Time with Calmneſs and Conſtancy, *I am not mad, I ſpeak forth the Words of Truth and Soberneſs.*

In which Words, we may obſerve theſe two Things; *Firſt*, The *Apoſtle* ſays, *That he ſpeaks the Words of TRUTH*; that is, he did not endeavour to impoſe upon Mankind, by preaching what he knew to be falſe; no, he really believed the Doctrine he delivered, his Judgment was fully convinced of the Truth of what he taught, and his Heart as well as his Tongue, was engaged in the Cauſe. *Secondly*, He affirms, that he *ſpeaks the Words of SOBERNESS*; that is, he was not a fooliſh and enthuſiaſtick Man, taking his own groundleſs Opinions and Fancies for the Illumination of the Spirit of GOD; but he was in the full Exerciſe of his Reaſon and Underſtanding, and taught and related nothing but what was true and real.

But *my Brethren*, Though our Text leads us to ſpeak of the Integrity and Judgment of the *Apoſtle Paul* only, we ſhall not confine ourſelves to this Topick. We propoſe to extend the Argument to all the reſt of the *Apoſtles*, and to prove that they were credible Witneſſes of the Truths

of

of the Goſpel; that they did *ſpeak the Words of Truth and Soberneſs.*

Iſt, The Teſtimony of the *Apoſtles* is TRUE; they really believed what they taught, to be Truth; they did not deſign to impoſe upon, or to deceive the World, by preaching JESUS CHRIST and his *Goſpel.*

IIdly, The Teſtimony of the *Apoſtles* is SOBER; they were in the full Exerciſe of their Reaſon and Underſtanding, and were not impoſed upon by their own groundleſs Opinions and Fancies.

I.

The Teſtimony of the *Apoſtles* is TRUE; they really believed what they taught, to be Truth; they had no Deſign to impoſe upon, or to deceive the World by preaching *JESUS CHRIST*, and his *Goſpel.*

If you will allow the *Apoſtles* to have been Men of common Senſe and Underſtanding, you cannot poſſibly conceive, for what Reaſons they ſhould have publiſhed the Chriſtian Religion, with ſo great Zeal and Conſtancy, doing and ſuffering every Thing to perſwade others of the Truth of it, if they had believed it to be falſe. Let us judge of Things done in former Ages, and in remote Countries, by what comes to paſs, and we are Witneſſes to, among ourſelves; for in certain Reſpects human Nature hath always been, and ſtill is the ſame in all Places of the World. We never act (in difficult and dangerous Matters eſpecially) but from ſome Spring or Motive, that awakens and determines us, and whereby we are ſupported and encouraged to go on in our Undertaking: And this Motive is an Apprehenſion of Good, true or falſe, ſolid or apparent. If then the *Apoſtles* did not really believe, but feign the Doctrines which they

preached, they muſt have had, in their own Opinion, ſome great and neceſſary Reaſon for ſo doing. But what Reaſon could there poſſibly be to induce them to this? If there was any, it muſt have been ſome one, or other of theſe following; a great Love to the Memory of their *Maſter*; or, a Deſire of Riches and Honours and Preferments; or a Deſign to gain Fame and Reputation to themſelves. But the Apoſtles could not be actuated by any one of theſe Motives. And this I ſhall prove; not that there is the leaſt Difficulty in the Matter; but that even the weakeſt *Chriſtians* may be able to ſtop the Mouthes of Infidels, when they alledge that the *Apoſtles* carried on ſome worldly Deſign by preaching the Goſpel.

Firſt, The *Apoſtles*, if the Things which they preached were falſe, could not be actuated in their Undertaking by a great Love to their *Maſter*. 'Tis true, the Diſciples ſeemed to have greatly loved him during his Life; becauſe they hoped to ſhare of the Riches and Glory of the Kingdom, which they imagined he was to ſet up in the World. But when this vain Hope of their's was fruſtrated, when inſtead of being raiſed to a Crown and Kingdom, and themſelves his firſt Officers of State; they ſaw their *Maſter* perſecuted, condemned, crucified, buried, and themſelves left friendleſs and expoſed to Reproach and Ridicule upon his Account; muſt they not have loſt their great Eſteem of him, and cooled in their Love towards him? Nay, muſt not they have been filled with Diſguſt and Hatred to him for having ſo much abuſed them, as they could not but think he had done? So that inſtead of proclaiming him the *Son of GOD*, they muſt have condemned him as an *Impoſtor*; inſtead of embracing and publiſhing any Doctrines which he taught, they muſt have abhorred them, and warned all Men againſt them. It is natural to ſuppoſe, that the Minds

Minds of the Apoſtles muſt have operated in this Manner?

But though contrary to what generally happens to all Mankind in like Circumſtances, they could have loved their *Maſter*, even after he had deceived them, and all their Hopes of Riches and Honours were fruſtrated (for when once ſome Perſons have taken a liking to a Man, and engaged in his Cauſe, it is not even the greateſt Follies and Crimes, that can make them alter their Sentiments) yet, is it poſſible, that in order to acquire Fame and Glory to his Name and Religion, they ſhould have expoſed themſelves to the greateſt Diſgrace and Miſery, if they had taken his Religion to be a Fable, and himſelf a Deceiver?

I know that Infidels alledge againſt this Way of Reaſoning, the Fable of the Apparition of *Romulus* to *Proculus* a *Senator* of *Rome*, who ſwore that he had ſeen *Romulus* after his Death, more glorious and venerable than ever he was in his Life, aſcend to Heaven, and command that he ſhould ever afterwards be adored as a God. But there is no Compariſon between the Teſtimony of *Proculus*, and that of the *Apoſtles*. If it be true, what may be gathered from the Roman Hiſtorians, that the *Senators* diſpleaſed with *Romulus*, took the Advantage of a great Storm, to kill him, and ſaid that he was deſtroyed by Lightning: If they were afraid leſt the Sight of him dead ſhould have rendered them odious to the People, who all loved him; it was altogether agreeable to their Intereſt to ſupport the Story of his being carried up to Heaven in a Storm. They choſe rather to adore a dead Man, than to have a tyrannical Maſter in a living one. And as for the People, it was a great Pleaſure to them, to think, that the *Founder of their City*, was to be for ever their *Tutelar God*. All this was agreeable to the Notions and Prejudices of thoſe Times. Nothing

thing hath been more groſs and abſurd, in all Ages, than the Ideas of Mankind in Matters of Religion. They thought that the Gods were ſo like to Men, that they had no Difficulty in perſwading themſelves, that Men became like to the Gods. But the *Apoſtles* preached *JESUS CHRIST* and his Goſpel, in Oppoſition to the Opinions and Prejudices of both Jews and Gentiles, and contrary to the *Commands* of all the rich and great Men in the World: Their Syſtem of Religion condemned all others upon the Face of the whole Earth; and no ſooner did they open their Mouths in Favour of their *Maſter*, than they were perſecuted, ſcourged, condemned, executed.

Secondly, The *Apoſtles* did not preach the Goſpel from a Deſign to get Wealth and Riches, and to riſe to Honours and Preferments. Indeed this Principle hath often actuated Men, ſince the Goſpel came to be eſteemed in the World. Many have with great Zeal and Diligence preached the Chriſtian Religion from Town to Town, and from Country to Country, chiefly to be honoured and eſteemed, and to acquire Wealth and Riches. But this was not the Caſe with the *Apoſtles*. How could they imagine, that the Way for them to get Eſtates, or to procure the Conveniences and Comforts of Life, was to preach, that a *mean Jew* who was ignominouſly crucified at *Jeruſalem*, was the *Son of GOD*, and had riſen again from the Dead? How could it enter into their Thoughts, that in order to riſe to Honours and Preferments, they muſt teach a Religion, that was univerſally contemned and ridiculed? Did not they on the contrary ſee, that this was the ſtrait and plain Road to the greateſt Want and Poverty, Shame and Diſgrace? Had not they all the Reaſon in the World to expect the ſame dreadful Fate, which their *Maſter* had lately ſuffered? The Hands of the *Jews*, as One expreſſeth

it,

it, were ſtill red with the Blood of their *Maſter*; and their Hearts enflamed with Hatred againſt all them that defended his Reputation, even to the excommunicating them, as Perſons accurſed. 'Tis then a vain Thing to ſay, that the *Apoſtles* deſigned to acquire Riches and Preferments by preaching the Goſpel.

Their Manner of Life likewiſe ſerves to clear them of all Suſpicions of this Kind. They were indeed reproached and vilified by the World: but even their greateſt Enemies never maintained, that they were wicked and abandoned in their Lives: eſpecially, they never gave the leaſt Grounds to ſuſpect them of covetous and ambitious Views; they did not recommend vulgar and darling Opinions; they did not flatter and careſs Men in Power and Authority; they did not creep into Houſes, and make a Gain of their rich Converts; they did not make Collections and purchaſe Lands under Pretence of devoting them to pious and charitable Uſes: could any ſuch Thing as this be fix'd upon them, we ſhould never be able to defend their Character. The Collections made by their Order, were diſtributed to the poor Saints, by Perſons whom the *Contributors* made Choice of for this Purpoſe: The *Apoſtles* continued to their laſt Breath, without Honours, without Eſtates, without Houſes, without Attendants: They worked with their own Hands; or, they lived upon the Charity of others; and very often, like their divine *Maſter*, they had not where to lay their Heads.

What Sort of Men are they that commonly become great and rich in the World? They are ſuch as take Methods quite contrary to thoſe of the *Apoſtles*. They are Sycophants and Flatterers, cunning and crafty Men, baſe Conformers to prevailing Opinions and Cuſtoms, be what they will, and ſuch like; whilſt Men of the greateſt Merit, if

they

they will not ſacrifice to the injudicious and fickle Multitude, their Reaſon, and their Conſcience, are neglected, if not contemned and affronted.

The *Apoſtle Paul* eſpecially cannot be thought to have acted from Views of Intereſt. He had a ſhorter as well as a more ſure Way to Preferments and Riches. He was a Man of great natural Parts and Abilities, he was well acquainted with all Sorts of Learning, he was skilled in all the Arts of Eloquence, & often ſpake ſo as even to move, and almoſt perſwade the greateſt Men, and the moſt powerful Enemies to Jesus Christ and his Religion. So that no doubt with theſe Qualifications he might have raiſed himſelf to the higheſt Offices of Power and Authority, and gathered as much Wealth as he pleaſed, among the *Jews* his Countrymen, if he could have acted a falſe or deceitful Part. He was likewiſe a Citizen of *Rome*; and therefore if he could have been ſo falſe as to change his Religion from worldly Views, that of the *Romans* was the faireſt for his Purpoſe. It is highly probable, that by going to *Rome*, and exerting his Talents among thoſe Maſters of the World, he might have almoſt ſatisfied his covetous and ambitious Deſires. But he, as well as the reſt of the Apoſtles, made Choice of a Religion that led directly to Poverty, Diſgrace, and all manner of Hardſhips. Did theſe Men carry on a Deſign for Riches and Power?

Thirdly, Neither did they forge the Things which they preached from a Deſign of Reputation and Fame. I confeſs human Nature is vain and fantaſtick, ſtubborn and obſtinate. Men very often engage in a wrong Cauſe, and defend it to the laſt, through want of Conſideration, through a raſh and precipitate Judgment, through Pride and Folly. But ſuppoſing the *Apoſtles*, as we do in this Argument, to have been Men of but a moderate Degree of Reaſon and Underſtanding, they muſt have

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seen that their Design for Glory could not possibly succeed, that it must unavoidably in a very short Time come to nothing: for as to the wonderful Success of the Gospel in the Mouths of the Apostles, and the great Glory which by *that* they acquired, and ever will preserve, it cannot be said, they foresaw this, without ascribing to them a Power to foretell future Events, which is the Thing we contend for.

Indeed, had they told a pleasant Story that would have amused and gratified Mankind; had they taught Doctrines agreeable to the Prejudices of the World in general, or of a certain People in particular, they might have had some Hopes of attaining their Ends, by feeding Men with Notions and Dreams, that would have been so entertaining to them. But instead of *this*, they taught Doctrines, they inculcated Precepts and Commands, they required Practices that appeared unreasonable and severe to all the World, Jews and Gentiles, high and low, rich and poor. What Glory could they expect from contradicting and disobliging every Body?

Besides, What Madness would it have been for them to sacrifice all the present Pleasures of the World, which they were capable of enjoying, to a Glory after they were dead and annihilated, and consequently when they could not possibly have any Sense of it! 'Tis true some of the ancient *Grecians* and *Romans* threw away their Lives out of vain Glory, to acquire Fame and Reputation. But they did this from the Hope of living in another World, and enjoying the Fame by which their Names should be celebrated in *this*. Whereas the *Apostles*, if they had been false Witnesses, could not expect an happy Immortality, but must have thought of being extinguished at Death. Or, if they believed a future State, their Lies and their Forgeries must have suggested

to them nothing, but eternal Pain and Miſery to be inflicted upon them there.

But ſuppoſe they could have fooliſhly flattered themſelves with Succeſs, and neglected all the Enjoyments of the World, for the Sake of an imaginary Fame hereafter, muſt not Experience ſoon have undeceived them, and obliged them to quit a Cauſe in which there was nothing but Shame and Diſgrace? Muſt they not ſoon have ſeen, that their *Names*, inſtead of being talked of with Eſteem and Honour, would be an hiſſing in all Nations wherever they ſhould be mentioned? Did not they ſoon obſerve that they were reckoned the Offſcourings of the Earth? and what Reaſon had they to expect that ever it would be otherwiſe with them? To ſay, that the *Apoſtles* were like the Man who burnt the Temple of *Diana* at *Epheſus*, chuſing a bad Fame rather than none at all, is a wild and extravagant Suppoſition, inconſiſtent with their Character, their Numbers and Circumſtances.

Fourthly, The Objection, that the *Apoſtles* did not believe the Religion they taught, is inconſiſtent with the Nature and Tendency of that Religion. What is the Nature and Tendency of the Goſpel Diſpenſation? It is every Way agreeable to the moſt refined and exalted Notions of GOD, moſt perfective of the Nature, and conducive to the Happineſs and Well-being of Men. The *Apoſtles* teach us to fear, adore and love GOD with all our Hearts and all our Souls, to love our ſelves only in him, to neglect and ſacrifice ourſelves for his Sake; to worſhip, to pray, and to hope to be accepted of him through the Merits and Interceſſion of JESUS CHRIST, his only begotten, and well-beloved Son. They teach us to deal juſtly and equitably with all Men, to love them as our ſelves, to lay our ſelves out in promoting their Happineſs, to forgive our Enemies, and to return them Good for Evil. They

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teach us to be ſober and temperate, and patient and contented in all Conditions and Circumſtances of Life; In a Word, they teach us to imitate the moral Perfections of GOD, and to become Partakers of his Nature.

Now, *my Brethren*, do not theſe Things prove, that the *Apoſtles* were honeſt and upright Men, that there was no Fraud, nor Deceit in them? Could Impoſtors and Deceivers have taken ſo much Pains to inſtruct the World in the moſt wiſe and virtuous Leſſons, that ever were heard of? No; theſe Doctrines and Precepts are too uneaſy to wicked Hearts, they give them too much Trouble, for them to make them ſo familiar to themſelves, as they muſt do, in order to repreſent them in all the Light and Force, in which they are to be ſeen in the Goſpel. No reaſonable Man can conceive, that the Authors of the pureſt and moſt perfect Syſtem of Religion and Morality that ever was heard of, ſhould have taken Pleaſure in deceiving the beſt of Men, and impoſing upon them Lies and Falſhoods. Had they been *Impoſtors*, they would have taught another Sort of Religion; their own Corruptions and wicked Diſpoſitions would certainly have mixed with it. So that inſtead of a reaſonable, holy and divine Religion, we ſhould have had a Mixture of Truth and Falſhood, of Virtue and Vice, of important and trifling Things. I ſhall conclude this firſt Part of our Diſcourſe with obſerving in the

Laſt Place, That the *Apoſtles* could not be Impoſtors, becauſe they ventured their Lives for their Teſtimony, and ſealed it with their Blood. They gained nothing by preaching the Goſpel, neither worldly Riches, nor Preferments, nor Glory, nor Pleaſures; nay, ſo far were they from *that*, that they expoſed themſelves hereby to Poverty, and Shame, and Diſgrace and Pain: and what is the higheſt Evidence that can be given of any Man's Sin-

cerity, they laid down their Lives for the Goſpel and ſealed it with their Blood. Impoſtors have often boaſted of being ready to ſuffer every Thing, and even Death it ſelf in any Shape whatſoever, for the Sake of their Doctrines and Schemes: but they have always fallen upon Methods to eſcape the Trial; or they have ſhrunk back in a Time of Danger. The *Apoſtles* did not fooliſhly expoſe themſelves to Sufferings: but they did not decline them, when the Providence of GOD called upon them to bear Teſtimony to the Truth in this Manner; and almoſt all of them, according to the Hiſtory we have of them, ſealed their Doctrines with their Blood.

It is true, to lay down our Lives for a Cauſe, does not ſufficiently prove the Truth of that Cauſe, or the Infallibility of the Perſon that lays down his Life for it. Many alas! have died in a bad Cauſe, and that with as much ſeeming Readineſs and Chearfulneſs, as if they had been abſolutely certain of the Truth and Goodneſs of it. But the *Martyrdom* of the *Apoſtles*, is the beſt Argument that can be, that they were ſincere in *that* for which they ſuffered *Martyrdom*, and that they really believed what they taught. It was never known, it is unnatural to ſuppoſe that any Man ſhould perſiſt in aſſerting what he knows to be falſe, to the Loſs of his Life; much leſs that a Number of Men, as the *Apoſtles*, ſhould agree in the ſame monſtrous Folly and Madneſs. There is no Motive to induce them to this. On the contrary, they ſuffer Pain and Diſgrace and Miſery here, and they muſt be excluded from the Happineſs of another State; becauſe according to their own Scheme, all falſe and diſhoneſt Men muſt ſuffer the Puniſhment of their Wickedneſs in the next Life.

Since then, the *Apoſtles* could not be actuated by a Love to their *Maſter*, but on the contrary, they muſt have hated him, if he had deceived them; ſince there

there is not the least Reason to suspect them of a Design to get Riches and Preferments, or to rise to Fame and Reputation; since the Religion they taught is pure & divine, and contrary to all Manner of Dishonesty & Wickedness, and they sealed their Belief of it with their Blood; there is not therefore the least Ground to suspect them of a Design to impose upon the World, by teaching what they knew to be false. On the contrary, there is all imaginable Reason to believe that they were true and honest Men, and that they did speak the real Sentiments of their Hearts. Let us now proceed to the second general Head, which was to shew that the Testimony of the *Apostles* is SOBER, that they were in the full Exercise of their Reason and Understanding, and not imposed upon by their own groundless Opinions and Fancies.

II.

The human Mind is liable to great Disorders and Extravagances. Many Persons from the Conceits of a warmed or over-weening Brain, perswade themselves that they are the particular Favourites of Heaven, and that every vain Notion that settles strongly in their Fancies, is the Effect of divine Inspiration; and that for no other Reason, but because they imagine so, and feel annexed to their Notions, what they fondly take to be supernatural Joys and Raptures. And when once this *enthusiastick Humours* gets Possession of a Man, whatever Action he finds in himself a strong Inclination to do, be it never so wicked and hurtful, the Impression is thought to be a Call from GOD; and stung with a Violence not to be checked or controuled, without Consideration, without Judgment, he hurries into the Performance of it. Nothing spreads itself faster and more universally than this wild and extravagant Humour. "When suffered to gather Strength, it "spreads its Infection through a Multitude, it makes

"Havock

"Havock in a Nation, like a Fire driven by the "Wind through a rich Harveſt of Corn: It overturns "all Religion, Government, Order and Decency, "and like a Torrent bears down every Thing before "it. The *Enthuſiaſt*, like all other Madmen, hath more Spirit and Strength than uſual, and he exerts himſelf to a Degree wonderful and more than human. He profeſſes ſo much Truth and Sanctity, ſpeaks with ſo great Zeal and Confidence, pretends to ſo much Freedom and Familiarity with GOD, and looks with ſo much Emotion and Fire, that the Multitude amazed and raviſhed at his extraordinary Air and Manner of Talking, are melted down before him, implicitly receive his Notions and Impreſſions, and become molded into what Form he pleaſes.

Such Perſons as theſe, according to the Suggeſtion of Infidels, were the *Diſciples* and *Apoſtles* of *JESUS CHRIST*; and therefore ſay they, their Teſtimony is not at all to be depended upon: All the peculiar Doctrines and Facts related in the Goſpel, are the Product of their diſtracted and viſionary Brains. But in this Reſpect the Adverſaries of our Religion are very much miſtaken. There is no Compariſon between the Perſons we call *Enthuſiaſts*, and the *Diſciples* and *Apoſtles* of JESUS CHRIST. And that you may be fully ſatisfied of this, conſider *Firſt*, the Circumſtances of the Facts related by the *Apoſtles*; *Secondly*, the Miracles which they wrought. *Thirdly*, the Excellency of their Doctrines; *Fourthly*, the Prejudices and evil Habits and Cuſtoms which they rooted out and overcame; *Fifthly*, the Temper of their Minds, and their moral Character and Behaviour; *Sixthly*, their great Regard to Reaſon, and the Perfection to which they carried it. The Conſideration of theſe Articles will ſufficiently prove, that the Apoſtles were ſober Men.

Firſt,

Firſt, As to the Circumſtances of the Facts which they relate. Perſons under the Influence of a deluded Imagination, believe and relate every Thing they hear, or fancy or dream, and that is agreeable to their Inclinations and Prejudices, without enquiring whether it be right or wrong, true or falſe. They delight in ſtrange and wonderful Events, happening in remote Countries and at a great Diſtance of Time, in Miracles done in the Dark which no Body ever ſaw, and monſtrous Sights in the Air; their Converſation is full of Viſions, Impulſes, Propheſies, Revelations; their Opinions are notoriouſly abſurd, and their Schemes chequer'd with groſs Contradictions; they are likewiſe inconſiſtent with one another; and different Perſons of the ſame Stamp, deliver quite contrary Things.

The *Apoſtles* were Men of another Character. The Things which they related, were plain and obvious Matters of Fact, which every Body might know the Truth of. They teſtifie, that *JESUS CHRIST* after his Crucifixion and Death, did *riſe again from the Dead, that he ſhewed himſelf alive by many infallible Proofs; and after forty Days, when the Time was come for him to aſcend to the Father, before the Eyes of the Diſciples and them that were with them, he was parted from them, and taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight.* All the Diſciples did converſe with JESUS CHRIST after his Reſurrection, they did eat with him, they heard him give Thanks, they ſaw him break Bread, they touched his Body, and found it to be Fleſh and Bones. *Behold my Hands and my Feet*, ſaid he to them, *that it is I myſelf.* He was ſeen of them in this Manner at ſeveral Times for forty Days, ſo that they had all Opportunity to examine into the Matter, and to compare all Circumſtances. He did ſpeak of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of GOD, and gave them ſeveral Inſtructions with Reſpect to

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their Behaviour and Conduct; and after all, they ſaw him parted from them, and carried up, till the Clouds intercepted their Sight. Now, the Circumſtances of theſe Facts are ſuch, that the *Apoſtles* and other Witneſſes could not poſſibly be deceived; they could not be all this while under the Deluſion of a viſionary Brain; they had plentiful and clear and convincing Evidence of the Truth and Reality of the Reſurrection and Aſcenſion of our Saviour: they could not poſſibly be deceived, unleſs they willingly deſigned to deceive themſelves. But we have ſhewn, that they were ſo far from this Deſign, that they had all the Reaſon in the World to the contrary.

Secondly, Let us conſider the Miracles wrought by the *Apoſtles*. Though they taught a reaſonable and divine Religion, and were credible Witneſſes of what they related; yet becauſe they went and preached to thoſe that never ſaw them before, and conſequently had no Reaſon at firſt to believe their Teſtimony, and becauſe they were oppoſed by the Princes and learned Men and Wits of the World, by the ſtrong Prejudices of Education in a contrary Religion, and by the Luſts and Intereſts of the wicked and vicious; therefore in order to overcome all this Oppoſition, and to procure Succeſs to the Goſpel, GOD was pleaſed to endue the *Apoſtles* with miraculous Powers and Gifts, which rouſed and alarmed Mankind, and convinced them, that GOD was come down amongſt them. *GOD bore Witneſs to them with Signs and Wonders, and with diverſe Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt.* Nay, the *Son of GOD himſelf*, who ſpake as never Man ſpake, condeſcended to prove his Divinity, and the Truth of his Doctrines, by working Miracles. He deſired the *Jews* to believe him, upon Account of the good and mighty Works he had done among them. And this is the Teſtimony

which

which GOD hath always given to those, whom he hath sent upon an extraordinary Message to Mankind, and what we reasonably demand from all Pretenders to Inspiration, and such as say, that they have an extraordinary Commission to reform the World.

But how different is the Conduct of Enthusiasts in this Respect, from that of our *blessed Saviour* and his *Apostles*? Though they not only perswade themselves, but are likewise very much in earnest to perswade others, that they have an immediate Intercourse with GOD, are under the peculiar Guidance of his Holy Spirit in all their Thoughts and Opinions, and are commissioned immediately from Heaven, to teach and save Men; yet they give us no *Manner* of Proof; much less do they work Miracles, to convince us that they are inspired; but they require us to believe them, meerly because they say, that they feel the Spirit of GOD within them, and are confident and peremptory, that they cannot be deceived.

I confess some of the Priests of the *Church* of *Rome*, still pretend to miraculous Powers and Gifts; but it is in those Places of their Communion, where Credulity and Superstition greatly prevail, and the People dare not, or, have not an Opportunity to detect the Forgery. Neither their *Popes*, nor their learned Men pretend to any such Power. Some *Enthusiasts* among *Protestants* likewise in their Ravings, have confidently boasted, that the mighty Power of GOD hath been with them, and Miracles have been done by them, and have charged those with *Blaspheming* the *Holy Ghost*, that have dared to deny the Reality of them. But after all, their Pretensions have been absolutely false and groundless, supported only by a base Abuse of Scripture Expressions; or, the Effect of a strong and wild Imagination; And it is only those, that have worked themselves up to the greatest Extravagance, and a Pitch above

their Fellows, that pretend to work Miracles in Confirmation of their Impulſes and Fancies. The Generality reſt their bold Claims upon their own blind and confident Perſwaſion. They tell you, that they *know* they are in the right, as certainly as they know any one Thing whatſoever; that they ſee the Light infuſed into their Underſtandings by the *Spirit of GOD*, as clear as the Light of the Sun at Noon-day; that they feel the Impulſes and Operations of Heaven, and cannot be deceived in what they feel. And if you will not receive what they ſay, for Truth, but inſiſt upon their producing a better Proof of it, than their bare and confident Aſſertion, "you are unconverted Men, Strangers to the "Power of Grace, and in a damnable Condition.

Weak and deluded Creatures! to take their blind and raſh Confidence for the Impreſſion of the Spirit of Light and Conviction; for no other Reaſon, to be ſure, but becauſe they imagine ſo; and to think that their Perſwaſions are right, only becauſe they are ſtrong in them! Beſides, if the *Strength* of your Perſwaſions and Impulſes be a certain Proof that they are from GOD; then, oppoſite and contradictory Perſwaſions and Impulſes, may both be from Him; Men of different and oppoſite Religions, may both be in the right: for, every Day we ſee thoſe that are in an Error, as poſitive and peremptory, as thoſe that maintain the Truth; and the zealous *Muſſelmen* are as confident, that *Mahomet* was a great *Prophet*, and that his Religion came from Heaven, as any Chriſtian can be of the divine Authority of *JESUS CHRIST* and his *Apoſtles*. But contradictory Propoſitions cannot be both true; oppoſite Revelations cannot be both from GOD; therefore the Strength of an Impulſe, is no Proof of the Truth of it: Men's being peremptory in their Perſwaſions, is no Reaſon at all that they are in the right.

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST and his *Apoſtles* did not deſire

deſire Men to believe them, only becauſe they were perſwaded that what they taught, was true. They appealed to their Miracles, to the mighty Works which they did, and which plainly demonſtrated that the Power of GOD was with them.

A *Third* Mark of Diſtinction between the *Apoſtles* and *Enthuſiaſts*, is the Doctrines which they taught. The Doctrines of theſe firſt Preachers of Chriſtianity, are plain and uſeful; thoſe of *Enthuſiaſts* are unintelligible and vain. It is only the rational and ſober Mind, that can have clear Ideas of Things, and think in a Manner ſuted to the Benefit of Mankind. So far as Paſſion, Prejudice, or Fancy prevail in us, our Thoughts and Speeches muſt be dark, fooliſh, and of a hurtful Tendency, Now *Enthuſiaſm* proceeding from the Extravagancies of a diſtempered Imagination, he that is ſo unhappy as to be influenced by it, muſt accordingly think and ſpeak; his Thoughts and Diſcourſe muſt be confuſed, wild and diſtracted. A bitter Fountain ſendeth forth bitter Waters. A Man of good natural Abilities, that hath had the beſt Education, that hath made great Progreſs in the Study of Books and of the World, that is enriched with all Knowledge; let him once but think himſelf inſpired when he is not, his Sentiments and Diſcourſe will partake of his Diſorder and Wildneſs; he will be perplexed and violent; he will diſpiſe all Knowledge and Learning; he will not give himſelf the Trouble to uſe Books or Converſation for the improving of his Mind; he will devote himſelf to idle Dreams and Chimeras; he will be altogether inconſiſtent with himſelf. But when this Diſtraction gets into the Perſon of a dull and illiterate Man, it makes *him* ſtill more abſurd, ridiculous and miſchievous; every Thing that looks like ſober Reaſon, or wiſe Inſtruction, is an Abhorrence to him; he delights in the wide Regions of Ignorance and Darkneſs, and is abandoned to Stupidity and Nonſenſe.

Not ſo do the holy *Apoſtles* think and teach; their Inſtructions are plain, and uſeful at the ſame Time: They *ſpeak the Words of Truth and Soberneſs*. What can be more obvious to the Underſtanding, and more beneficial to Mankind, than the Syſtem of Religion contained in the New-Teſtament? JESUS CHRIST the only begotten, and well beloved Son of GOD, was incarnate, and appeared in the Nature of Man; he wrought many Miracles; he taught an heavenly Doctrine; he lived a holy Life; he died for the Sins of the World, he roſe again for their Juſtification; he aſcended to Heaven, and will come again at the laſt Day to judge all Mankind. In order to obtain the divine Favour and be eternally happy, we muſt believe in *JESUS CHRIST*, and obey all his Commands, which are every Way worthy of GOD, and perfective of human Nature; and for this Purpoſe the Holy Spirit of GOD is ready to ſtrengthen and aſſiſt us in ſuch a Manner, as will make our ſincere Endeavours effectual. Theſe are the great Doctrines of the *Apoſtles*, and they are ſuted to the Capacity of all Men, and for univerſal Benefit. Beat your Brains; ſtretch your Thoughts; try if you can conceive any Thing more ſimple, more noble, more for the Glory of human Nature, and the Happineſs of Society, than the Precepts and Doctrines of the New-Teſtament. And as to their Manner of writing, it is not mean nor low, fierce nor violent; much leſs horrid or outrageous; it is ſuted to the Grandeur and Majeſty of the Truths which they deliver; they expoſe them to the World in all their Beauty and in all their Glory; ſo that they loſe nothing of their Value in their Mouths.

What though you may obſerve ſome ſolid Truths, ſome pious Sentiments, ſome tolerable Ways of ſpeaking in the Writings and Diſcourſes of viſionary Men? You will likewiſe meet with many vain

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and trifling Speculations, baſe and unmanly Tenets, manifeſt Abſurdities, ſhocking and impious Doctrines. Now they ſwell into the imaginary and falſe ſublime, into fuſtian and bombaſt; and then they ſink into mean and low Expreſſions, very remote from the noble Simplicity, Greatneſs and Plainneſs of the *Apoſtles*.

Fourthly, Let us conſider the Prujudices and evil Habits and Cuſtoms which the *Apoſtles* attacked, and which they ſubdued and overcame. *Enthuſiaſm* is wonderfully powerful and extenſive. In all Ages and Countries, thoſe under the real, or pretended Influence of this Spirit, have had great Succeſs; they have been followed by Multitudes, eſpecially of the inferiour Sort of People. When a few or more are once ſeized with this Phrenzy, their very Looks are infectious, the Fury flies from Face to Face; and the Diſeaſe is no ſooner ſeen than caught. This is evident from numberleſs Inſtances in the Hiſtory of Mankind. An *Enthuſiaſt*, let his Character otherwiſe be what it will, a Knave, a Fool, or a mad Man, gathers Crowds of Followers.

But at the ſame Time, my *Brethren*, it is certain that *Enthuſiaſm* always terminates in thoſe Notions which the People have been accuſtomed to entertain with Love and Approbation; and there never was an Inſtance of an *Enthuſiaſt's* ſucceeding in the World, but in flattering the Corruptions, or in ſuting himſelf to the Prejudices, or preaching up the favourite Opinions of Men; eſpecially if they ſeemed to be in Danger, from the Attacks of ſome of oppoſite Principles. You may work up yourſelves, or, you may be worked up by others into Heats and Raptures, which are falſly thought to be ſupernatural and divine, by meditating, or hearing Diſcourſes upon ſuch Subjects as agree with your Temper, your Inclinations, your particular Byaſs, your Cuſtoms: but when a Thought is darted in upon you contrary

contrary to your eſtabliſhed Notions, or prevailing Paſſions; or, if a heated Viſionary teaches Things which you have always looked upon with Diſlike, you immediately ſee his Folly, and treat him with Contempt, or Neglect. Thoſe that are acquainted with the Hiſtory of the World, know that this hath been ſo in Fact, from the Beginning, down to the preſent Times. Some *Enthuſiaſts* have recommended themſelves to a People, by favouring Vice and Wickedneſs: Others by praiſing the Piety, the Orthodoxy, the Bravery and Sufferings of their Fore-Fathers, which they knew would be agreeable to them: Others have flattered their Pride and Vanity, and taken the Advantage of their Diſcontent, and great Fondneſs to be equalled to, if not raiſed above their Betters: Others by ſuting themſelves to rebellious and turbulent Men, have eaſily infuſed their Spirit into them: Others by talking in a proper Way to Perſons of a melancholy Turn of Mind, have worked them up to Wildneſs and Extravagance; And all of them without Exception, have found another Way to Heaven, than that of a good and holy Life.

But this cannot be ſaid with Reſpect to the *Apoſtles*. The Doctrines they received, were quite contrary to all the Notions, they had entertained from their Cradles to that Time. They taught the *Jews*, that their Meſſias was not to be a great worldly Prince; that he was not to recover them from Slavery and raiſe them to worldly Glory and Honour; that the Law was not to continue forever; but that Jesus Christ whom they had crucified was the the promiſed Meſſias, that he had riſen again from the Dead, and was aſcended to Heaven, that all the ceremonial Part of the Law muſt be aboliſhed, that *Moſes* muſt yield to Jesus Christ, a pure and ſimple Religion take Place; and that the *Jews* muſt become one People with all other Nations, and join in worſhiping God in Spirit and in Truth. They taught

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the *Heathens* to renounce their Gods and their Worſhip, though ancient and pompous; to deſpiſe their vain Philoſophy, which was ſo dear to them; to break off their univerſal and inveterate Habits and Cuſtoms, and to embrace a Saviour whom they deſpiſed and ridiculed, and a Religion which they accounted Folly.

Theſe Doctrines and Precepts which the *Apoſtle's* preached, were directly contrary, I ſay, to all the Maxims, and Religions, and Inclinations of all the World; and yet they ſucceeded in preaching them; they prevailed with the *Jews* to forſake their Ceremonies, and the *Heathens* their Idolatry, and to join all as one People in embracing a crucified Saviour, and worſhipping the only living and true GOD through him. Theſe Things could not be the Effects of viſionary Schemes and Deſigns. Nothing but a ſerious and calm Conviction of the Truth, attended with the Power and Efficacy of divine Grace, could produce ſuch an Alteration.

What ſhall I ſay of the corrupt and vicious Inclinations, and of the evil Habits of Mankind, which the *Apoſtles* preached againſt and overcame? They contended not only with miſtaken Heads, but likewiſe with wicked Hearts. They forbid not only ſinful Actions, but likewiſe ſinful Thoughts. They required Obedience not only to Part of the Law, but to the whole Law, without excepting the leaſt Precept. In a Word, they preſſed a thorough Reformation of Heart and Life; and that Men ſhould become holy, as GOD is holy. Such were the Doctrines of the *Apoſtles*, and they were received by many. Certainly then, the Finger of GOD was with them.

Fifthly, Let us conſider the Diſpoſitions and Behaviour of the *Apoſtles*. In this Reſpect likewiſe they differ exceedingly from *Enthuſiaſts*. I am far from maintaining, that every *Enthuſiaſt* is a wicked and

and vicious Man, hated by GOD, and liable to everlaſting Miſery. GOD forbid that I ſhould entertain an Opinion, ſo abſurd and uncharitable. I believe that many Perſons inclined this Way, are really pious and virtuous in their Hearts and Lives. There is a Degree of *Enthuſiaſm* conſiſtent with a Principle of Grace in the Soul. Where is the Man, that can ſay, I have made my Heart clean, I am free from Sin? The Heats of Devotion, if they are not tempered with Caution and Prudence, and guided by Reaſon, are very apt to degenerate into *Enthuſiaſm*. But how far a regenerated Perſon may be allowed to wander into the Wilds of this Paſſion, I do not pretend to determine. Only, there is a Srot of *Enthuſiaſm*, which I verily believe, is inconſiſtent with an honeſt and good Heart: And thoſe viſionary Creatures that make a Noiſe in the World, by their ſecret Impulſes, their intimate Communion with GOD, their Inſpirations, their Revelations, are remarkable for theſe very great Sins. *Firſt*, An extravagant Self-Conceit, and a thorough Contempt of others. Imagining that GOD hath a particular Regard for them above all other Men, and that he makes them the great Inſtruments of his Providence on all Occaſions; they are filled with intolerable Pride and Vanity, and look down with Contempt upon the reaſonable and ſober Man, as infinitely below them. I confeſs at the ſame Time, they affect to be very lowly, and ſelf-abaſed; acknowledging their great Sins, calling themſelves the worſt of all Mankind, and declaring that they are willing even to die, for the Sake of others. But with a little Attention, a diſcerning Eye may perceive this ſeeming Humility of theirs, to be nothing, but a refined Carnality, intolerable ſpiritual Pride, that expreſſes it ſelf in boaſting of the great Power of GOD within them, and that attends them; a mighty Sollicitude about the Applauſe of the World;

World, and a perfect Diſdain of all that will not admire and follow them. *Secondly*, They are remarkable for a Neglect, if not a Contempt of the moral Vertues. Having their Thoughts taken up with Dreams and Viſions, and their Souls filled with imaginary Raptures and Extaſies, and which are really nothing but the Workings and Overboilings of a heated Imagination; they have no Concern for the Laws of Truth and Righteouſneſs, no Sentiments of Love and Tenderneſs for Men. Or, if theſe great and important Duties ſometimes preſent themſelves to their Minds, they ſoon baniſh them again, as below their noble and elevated Souls, and becoming only Men of carnal and worldly Diſpoſitions. And if they are of a ſtirring and active Temper, they deſtroy the Quiet of their peaceable Neighbours, and become publick Diſturbers of Society. But what is worſt of all, whilſt they thus deſpiſe every Thing that is good, and are engaged in Miſchief, they would perſuade the World, that they are full of Love to them, and doing what is moſt for their Benefit and Advantage. *Thirdly*, They are remarkable for ſlighting human Laws, and divine Ordinances. At firſt they ſeem to be innocent and inoffenſive: But when the *Infatuation* prevails, and Numbers are added to them, they openly break the Laws, they deſpiſe Magiſtrates, and are for erecting a Government according to their own vain Imaginations, and what will make them Maſters of the Lives, as well as of the Eſtates of all their Oppoſers. It is the ſame with Reſpect to the Ordinances of God. They look upon them as beggarly Elements, and of no Uſe to Chriſtians of their high Degrees of Perfection.

The Character of the *Apoſtles* is ſo oppoſite to this, that it would be an Affront to their Memory to take much Pains to illuſtrate and prove it. Only, it is very evident from their Hiſtory, and from their

Writings, that they were really inoffenſive and blameleſs in their Sentiments and Manners, after their Converſion to Chriſtianity. To a ſtrict Piety and Devotion towards GOD, they joined Truth and Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Tenderneſs towards Men. Never had any Perſons ſo much Reaſon to be proud of their Privileges and Advantages, as the *Apoſtle's* had. They were immediately commiſſioned from Heaven to deliver the Will of GOD to the World; they were Ambaſſadors of JESUS CHRIST; they were endowed with extraordinary Powers, whereby they did work great Miracles, heal the ſick, caſt out Devils, raiſe the Dead, and the Spirit of God was communicated to them in a more abundant Meaſure than ever it hath been beſtowed upon any other Men ſince their Days: And yet they were far from being lifted up with the Thoughts of thoſe wonderful Favours; they were not proud and arrogant, vain and ſelf-conceited, Boaſters and Contemners of others. On the contrary, they had low and humble Thoughts of themſelves; they were dead to the Praiſe of Men; they themſelves ſeemed to be the only Perſons, that were inſenſible to their own Worth and Value; they preferred others to themſelves. Their Manners were an exact Tranſcript of what they taught. *Be cloathed with Humility: let every one eſteem his Neighbour better than himſelf: Seek not high Things; condeſcend to Men of low Degree.* 'Tis true, the *Apoſtles* ſometimes magnify their Office, and mention their Advantages, and their Faithfulneſs in the Diſcharge of their important Truſt. But it is only to do Juſtice to their own Character when baſely vilified by others, and to ſupport the Credit of the Goſpel, which it's Enemies attempted to wound through their Sides. And they do this, with all Meekneſs and Gentleneſs, ſpeaking but ſparingly of their own Graces and good Deeds, and inſiſting as little as poſſible upon the Sins

of

of their Adverſaries, notwithſtanding all the Provocations they had to the contrary. They paid a ſacred Regard to Morality in all their Speeches and Actions. Nothing that was falſe, diſhoneſt, crafty, cruel, malicious or revengeful, ever proceeded out of their Mouths, or appeared in their Conduct. *Whatſoever Things are true, juſt, honeſt, pure, lovely, of good Report, if there is any Virtue, if there is any Praiſe*, theſe Things they thought of, and practiſed. Above all Things they did put on Charity, *that Charity* which is the Soul and Life of all other Graces, *That Charity which ſuffereth long and is kind, which envieth not, vaunteth not itſelf, is not puffed up, doth not behave itſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not her own, is not eaſily provoked, thinketh no Evil, rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth, beareth all Things, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth all Things.* 1 Cor. 13. 4, 5, 6, 7. And as for human Laws, and divine Ordinances; as we ſaid in the Beginning of the Diſcourſe, the Apoſtles were ſubject to Magiſtrates, and to others in Authority; and they peremptorily commanded all Chriſtians inviolably to obſerve the ſame Conduct. They walked in all the Ordinances of GOD, embracing every Opportunity of this Kind, as a Means to improve in Wiſdom and Holineſs.

Sixthly, Let us conſider the great Regard which the Apoſtles had for Reaſon, and the Perfection to which they carried it. *Enthuſiaſts* are remarkable for their Hatred and Enmity to the Exerciſe of Reaſon and Underſtanding. There is very little of it to be ſeen, or heard in their Talk and Writings. They do what they can to vilifie this noble and divine Faculty, and to bring it into Diſgrace; and thoſe Things that have leaſt of the Air of ſolid Argument and good Senſe, and appear wonderful and extraordinary, are moſt agreeable to them: This proceeds, from theſe following Cauſes, *Firſt*, From

Sloth

Sloth and Indolence. It is a very tedious Thing for them to exerciſe their Reaſon and Underſtanding, as they ought to do: and very often, after all the Pains they take, they are unſucceſsful, and know not well what they ſhould believe, nor how they ſhould act. Therefore that they may be freed from this Uncertainty, and from the Troubles of a painful and rational Inquiry, they are glad of any Handle to pretend to Inſpiration, and to perſuade themſelves that the Spirit of GOD immediately ſuggeſts to them all their Opinions, and regulates all their Conduct. This flatters their lazy and ſlothful Temper. *Secondly*, Their Contempt of Reaſon proceeds from Pride and Vanity. Having raiſed themſelves into a Conceit, that they have a great perſonal Intereſt with God, and frequent Communications from the Holy Spirit; they think it below them to uſe the common and natural Ways of Knowledge, and fooliſhly imagine that by Vertue of their immediate intercourſe with the Deity, who is the Fountain of Light, all Things will be in an extraordinary Manner revealed and made known to them: This I ſay flatters their Vanity. O the Pleaſure and Glory of being inſpired! to come at Knowledge without the Trouble of Search and Enquiry, to be above the greateſt Philoſopher in the World, to be taught immediately by GOD himſelf! Let carnal Wretches conſult common Senſe; let them think, and Reaſon, and draw Conſequences; as for us, we are directed by a much ſuperior Guide: The Light ſhines from Heaven directly into our Minds. *Thirdly*, They are againſt Reaſon, becauſe Reaſon is againſt them. Reaſon is the moſt powerful and formidable Enemy, that the *Enthuſiaſt* hath to fight againſt. Whilſt there is the leaſt Spark of this in his Mind, he is in continual Uneaſineſs; he can have no Reſt. Therefore it is no Wonder, that he endeavours to baniſh it from him intirely, and to ruin its Credit among

mong others; that ſo he may never more be troubled with its painful Suggeſtions; that he is continually talking and preaching againſt Reaſon; as if Religion was an unreaſonable Thing, and the Author of our rational Powers and Faculties, was not that GOD who inſpired the holy Scriptures. I confeſs, they pretend, that they ſpeak againſt *carnal* Reaſon only; but then it is certain, that they call all Reaſon *carnal*, that does not favour their wild Opinions and Practices. They ſhun to converſe with Men of Underſtanding and Learning; they bid their Followers beware of them. Books written in this Way, they curſe, and condemn to the Flames.

But this is not the Language, nor agreeable to the Practice of the *Apoſtles*. So far were they from deſpiſing, or even neglecting Reaſon, that on the contrary they made continual Uſe of it; they recommended it ſtrongly to Chriſtians, and earneſtly exhorted them to examine the Doctrines which were taught them, by the Rules of Reaſon; they improved this divine Faculty, and carried it to a greater Degree of Perfection, than otherwiſe it could have arrived to.

The *Apoſtles* made continual Uſe of Reaſon. Carefully and without Prejudice read the Writings of theſe holy Men; conſider the Religion which they teach, and the Rules of Morality which they preſcribe; and you muſt be pleaſed and raviſhed with their Diſcoveries; you will find nothing but what is agreeable to Reaſon and good Senſe; you will be convinced, that to forſake their Guidance, is to forſake the plain Paths of Truth and Virtue, and to go aſtray into the Wilderneſs of Error and Folly. Indeed ſome of the Doctrines of the Scripture are incomprehenſible to the human Mind; they are above the Reach of our Underſtanding: and no Wonder it ſhould be ſo; for we have not a perfect Conception, even of thoſe Things which are every Day

before

before our Eyes, and which we think we are beſt acquainted with. Much leſs can we form an adequate Idea of ſpiritual and divine Revelations. *Who can by ſearching find out GOD? Who can find out the Almighty to Perfection?* But there is not any one Doctrine in Scripture, that can be proved to be contrary to Reaſon: they are above it, but they are not contrary to it.

And as the *Apoſtles* teach nothing but ſolid and unqueſtionable Truths, nothing but what is ſober and reaſonable; ſo it is by the Help of Reaſon that they recommend their Doctrines to the World. They could have challenged Mankind to believe them upon Account of the Miracles which they wrought, and the Excellency of their Doctrines and Precepts: but they did chuſe rather to perſwade them to embrace the Truth by Reaſon and Argument, when they would hearken to them: By Reaſoning, they prove that JESUS CHRIST is the Meſſias propheſied of in the Old-Teſtament; by Reaſoning, they ſhew the Heathens the Folly of their Idolatry; by Reaſoning, they diſplay the Beauty and Excellency of ſolid and ſubſtantial Piety and Virtue; by Reaſoning, they anſwer all Objections, and eſtabliſh the Truth. This is evident from the Writings of all the *Apoſtles*, eſpecially thoſe of the Apoſtle *Paul*, whom the greateſt Philoſophers have allowed to be a Maſter of Reaſon.

Moreover, So fair and upright are they, that they appeal to the Reaſon of Mankind, and require them to examine and judge what they ſay and preach. *I ſpeak as to wiſe Men*, ſays the Apoſtle *Paul*, 1 Cor. 10. 15. *I ſpeak as to wiſe Men, judge ye what I ſay.* In another Place; *Prove all Things; hold faſt that which is beſt.* And, 1 John 4. 1. *Beloved, believe not every Spirit; but try the Spirits.* Nay, the Son of GOD, who had all the Powers of Nature at his Command, condeſcended to inſtruct Men in Wiſ-

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dom and Knowledge, and by Reaſon and Argument, to perſwade them of the Truth of his Inſtructions; he ſupported every Thing he advanced by Proofs and Illuſtrations ſuted to the Capacity of thoſe, he had to do with. And when he put to Silence all his Adverſaries, and no Man durſt ask him any more Queſtions; it was not by the Power of Miracles, nor by the Force of Authority: it was by the Light and Evidence of the Doctrines which he taught.

Further, The *Apoſtles* of *JESUS CHRIST* improved Reaſon, and carried it to a greater Degree of Perfection, than otherwiſe it could have arrived to. With the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit that animated them, they diſcovered many new Principles, their Memories were ſtrengthned, their Attention was rendered cloſe and ſerious; their Love to Truth was warmed; they obſerved the Relation and Connection of Things; they argued juſtly; they formed Concluſions with all Fairneſs and Perſpicuity. And thus it was, that in great Meaſure they recovered themſelves from the Ignorance and Darkneſs, the Errors and Prejudices in which the reſt of Mankind were involved, and attained to that Wiſdom and Knowledge, in which human Nature was formed at firſt. And if we will carefully, and with an honeſt Heart, read and meditate upon the Writings of the *Apoſtles*, we ſhall learn from them, to diſpell the Clouds and Darkneſs that hang over our Minds, to put off our Prejudices, to correct our Errors; in a Word, we ſhall learn to be reaſonable and wiſe, as they were. *Beholding in them, as in a Glaſs, the Glory of the LORD, we ſhall be changed into the ſame Image, from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the LORD.*

Thus *my Brethren*, the Circumſtances of the Facts related by the *Apoſtles*; the Miracles which they wrought; the Excellency and Uſefulneſs of their Doctrines

Doctrines and Precepts; the wonderful Succeſs they had, notwithſtanding the great and terrible Oppoſition made to them, by the Prejudices, and Paſſions, and Cuſtoms of Mankind; their unblemiſhed Life and Converſation; their Regard to Reaſon, and the Perfection to which they did carry it; all theſe Things put together, ſufficiently prove that the Teſtimony of the *Apoſtles* is ſober; that they were not fanciful or viſionary Men; taking their own groundleſs Opinions and Imaginations for the Impreſſions of the divine Spirit; but that they were in the full Exerciſe of their Reaſon and Underſtanding, and taught and related nothing, but what was really true, and had come to paſs, juſt as they repreſented it.

And thus have we finiſhed the Argument we propoſed, with Reſpect to the Character and Qualifications of the *Apoſtles*. They were Men of Truth and Soberneſs: they had ſufficient Knowledge and Integrity to perſwade Belief: they could not poſſibly have any Deſign to deceive, or to impoſe upon others, and they were not deceived and impoſed upon themſelves. Therefore there is all the Reaſon in the World to believe them: And if there is any that will not receive their Teſtimony, and give Credit to the Revelation of the Goſpel, it is becauſe they are governed by their unaccountable Humours, their Prejudices, their Paſſions, or their Intereſt, and not by a Regard to Truth, and the Evidence of Things. And now let us proceed to the

APPLICATION.

Firſt, Let us lament the Corruption and Degeneracy of Mankind, that are ſo regardleſs of Truth and Reaſon. This is owing to our original Weakneſs and Depravity, to our Circumſtances in the World, and to the bad Education we receive from thoſe that have the Care of our Childhood and youthful Years. We are born blind and ignorant, fooliſh & perverſe, prone to that which is Evil. *We are conceived in Sin,*

and

and brought forth in Iniquity. As ſoon as we come into the World, immediately we dwell in the midſt of all Wickedneſs, and are ſurrounded with numberleſs Errors. The firſt Talk and Converſation we hear, and the firſt Examples we ſee, ſerve only to lead us into Darkneſs, and engage us in deceitful Paths. We come into the World with corrupted Diſpoſitions, and that incline and carry us to Evil, and the Education we receive, would ruin the moſt happy Temper of Mind. Our Parents inſtead of inſtilling into us a Love for Truth, and teaching us the Habit of Reaſoning, train us up to Delight in ſuch Things only, as pleaſe the Taſte, as dazzle the Eyes, in a Word, as charm the Senſes. When we come to the Years of Underſtanding, and are capable of exerciſing our Reaſon, the great Leſſons we receive, teach us only to think, and to labour, in Order to acquire Wealth and Riches, and that we may make a more ſhining Figure than others. Power and Authority, Pomp and Show, Affluence and Superfluity, are the great, if not the only Ends, we propoſe to ourſelves. Religion and Vertue, and our eternal Duration in another State beyond the Grave, are but little minded by us. Or, if we ſometimes allow theſe Things to enter into our Thoughts, the Notions we have of them, and the Form in which they appear, are taken from our particular Temper and Inclinations, the Prejudices of Education, or the Cuſtoms of the People among whom we live, and not from diligent and impartial Enquiry, ſerious Examination and rational Conviction. We are *Chriſtians* in this Part of the World, for the ſame Reaſons, that thoſe in *Turky* are *Mahometans*, and the *Indians* are *Pagans*. And having allowed our Prejudices, and Indolence, to grow up into ſtrong and inveterate Habits, we are unwilling to be cured, we cannot ſuffer ourſelves to be ſpoken to; and if any one preſſes us to hear-

ken to the Voice of Wiſdom, we feel very uneaſy, we are provoked, and like *Feſtus*, we pronounce the Truths of the Goſpel, *Folly and Madneſs*.

How unaccountable, how ſtupid is this Conduct! It ſinks our Heaven-born Souls into the mean and low Condition of the Brutes, and expoſes us to great Pain and Miſery. Our chief Buſineſs is to recover the Divine Image, which we loſt by the Fall. It is not to gratify our Senſes, and to provide for the Welfare of our Bodies only. No; It is to purify and exalt our Souls, to raiſe them to the higheſt Degree of Wiſdom and Vertue, Truth and Righteouſneſs, Meekneſs and Humility, Goodneſs and Mercy, and ſo to prepare them for the Society of the bleſſed Spirits in the Regions of Immortality. And for this Purpoſe, we muſt ſhake off our Prejudices, we muſt endeavour to diſpell the Darkneſs of our Minds, we muſt cheriſh and cultivate a Love for Truth, we muſt take great Care and Pains to improve our rational Faculties, and to grow in Knowledge: We *muſt offer to GOD our Souls and our Bodies purified and ſanctified, which is our reaſonable Service.*

Secondly, We may ſee the Error and Deluſion of Infidels, who ridicule and inſult our moſt holy Religion, and would have the Teachers of it, eſpecially the *Apoſtles*, to paſs for diſhoneſt or viſionary Men. GOD in Mercy to Mankind hath revealed his Will to us, and the Book which contains this Will, we have in our Hands. Every Thing in it, is worthy of GOD, perfective of human Nature, and tends to the general Happineſs of the World. We have all the Evidence for the Truth of the Matters of Fact related in the Goſpel, which they are capable of, ſuppoſing they were true; and thoſe that deny them, muſt, if they deal fairly, deny the Validity of all moral Evidence whatſoever. How abſurd a Thing is it then to disbelieve the Goſpel, in which there

there are ſuch ſhining Characters of Divinity? How ſtrange that ſo many, as we have Reaſon to apprehend there are in the World, ſhould quarrel and find Fault with the ſacred Oracles, inſtead of profiting by them; ſhould reject *that* Evidence for their Truth, as vain and frivolous, which they look upon as demonſtrative in other Caſes; ſhould for the Sake of the Follies and Extravagancies of Chtiſtians, which are plainly contrary to the Goſpel, condemn the Goſpel itſelf, and cry, Raze it, raze it even to the Foundation?

What poſſibls Cauſe can we aſſign for this Conduct? The Goſpel gives them great Uneaſineſs; the Laws of this Book are contrary to their Luſts and Paſſions; the Miſery threatned therein, alarms them; they want to live as they pleaſe, to have no Rule, but their Deſires, no Law but their Inclinations; and their Pride agreeing with their other Luſts, makes them think it a glorious Victory, to overcome their Reaſon, and to contemn the Reproaches of their Conſcience. May GOD recover them from their Prejudices, and give them to know the Truth as it is in JESUS.

Thirdly, From what hath been ſaid, we may ſee the great Miſtake of ſome Chriſtians, who may have an honeſt Meaning, but who are ſo unreaſonable as to place the Perfection of the Chriſtian Religion, in certain inward Impulſes and Impreſſions, in certain Viſions and Fancies, that have no Countenance from Scripture, but on the contrary are expreſly condemned by it, and which tend to render our Religion ſuſpected, and to introduce Infidelity and all manner of Impiety and Vice. I acknowledge, (becauſe it is clearly revealed in the Goſpel) I acknowledge that Spirit of GOD reſides in every true Chriſtian, and works in him both to will, and to do; and that without his ſpecial Aid and Aſſiſtance, we cannot ſo much as think a

good

good Thought. He enlightens our Minds, he renews our Wills, he cauſes us to believe in GOD, to love him and to obey his Laws; but he does theſe Things, by diſcovering to us Religion and Vertue, and propounding the Arguments, or Evidence, that perſwade us to embrace them; by fixing our Minds upon theſe Arguments and Evidence, and keeping them intent, till they have prodnced their proper Effect; by begetting in us a prevailing Taſte and Reliſh for Piety and Virtue, ſo as to make us love them with all our Hearts and above all Things; by enlarging our Knowledge, and ſtrengthning our Reaſon in ſpiritual Things, and by furthering and helping forward the Efficacy of our Perſwaſions and Inclinations, in our Hearts and Lives, in our Regeneration and Sanctification. And theſe Things he generally, if not always performs in ſo calm and gentle a Manner, as that we cannot diſtinguiſh the Operation of the Spirit of GOD within us, from the Workings of our own Minds. A Man may know when pious and holy Thoughts and Inclinations prevail in him, and when he does a good Action: but the Spirit of GOD that moves him to theſe Things, he cannot feel any otherwiſe, than by being ſenſible, that he ſees and is convinced of the Truth, and that he loves and takes Pleaſure in it, *The Wind bloweth where it liſteth and thou heareſt the Sound thereof.* You hear the Sound of the Wind, and you ſee the other Effects it produces; but you know not, where it begins, nor where it ends. *So is every one that is born of the Spirit.* We ſee that he is changed, he is ſenſible of it himſelf; but the Action that produces this Change, is above his Comprehenſion. And as for ſpiritual Joy, or the *Joy of the Holy Ghoſt*, this flows naturally from a Conſciouſneſs of having believed in GOD and obeyed his Commands, and conſequently that we are guided by his Spirit, are the Objects of his ſpecial Favour and Mercy,

Mercy, and entitled through JESUS CHRIST, to a bleſſed Immortality: And in Proportion to the Degree of our Faith and Obedience, is our ſpiritual Comfort and Joy. Theſe Things are plain to every one that attentively and without Prejudice, will conſider the holy Scripture. And the Miſtakes of Chriſtians in this Reſpect, are owing to their taking certain Texts in a Senſe which they will by no Means bear, which is contrary to the Tenor of the New-Teſtament, and to the plain Dictates of Reaſon and Underſtanding.

Impulſes then, Impreſſions, Feelings, ſecret Whiſpers, and ſuch like Things, which you cannot prove to come from GOD, any other Way, but becauſe they are ſtrong and violent, ought to be rejected. You have no Reaſon in the World to believe them, but becauſe you believe them. And they tend to render our Religion ſuſpected, and to expoſe it to the Scorn and Deriſion of Infidels. What Credit can we give to Men under the Influence of groundleſs Dreams, Viſions, Raptures, Impulſes? If the *Apoſtles* had been Men of this Kind, their Teſtimony would be of very little Significancy. And how baſe and unmanly is it, to be guided neither by Scripture nor Reaſon, but to give our ſelves up to the blind and mad Suggeſtions of an heated and diſorderly Brain! Nothing more vilifies human Nature: It ſinks it even below the Brutes that periſh. Hence it is, that ſo many are prejudiced againſt Religion, that ſome never embrace it, and that others throw it off, after they have put on the Profeſſion of it. Unthinking Men not being able, or not being willing to diſtinguiſh between *Religion* and *Enthuſiaſm*, but having as much Knowledge and Underſtanding as to ſee the Folly and Abſurdity of the laſt of theſe, they condemn both in the Lump, and betake themſelves to Infidelity, as the moſt rational Scheme. Thus the Perſons that profeſs the greateſt Regard to Truth, are its worſt Enemies;

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and Religion receives the moſt fatal Wounds in the Houſe of its pretended Friends. Conſider the Nature of Things, enquire into the Hiſtory of former Generations, and you ſhall find that *Enthuſiaſm* hath always been a Forerunner of Infidelity and Immorality. Theſe have always followed it, as the Shadow does the Body. May GOD of his infinite Mercy order Things otherwiſe with Reſpect to us!

Fourthly, My dear Brethren, ſuffer the Word of Exhortation. Be upon your Guard againſt *Infidelity* and *Enthuſiaſm.* I know not which of theſe is the greateſt Enemy to true Religion. If the Deiſt denies JESUS CHRIST, the Viſionary repreſents him as a capricious, partial, unjuſt and cruel Being. You are in greater Danger of Infidelity than you may be aware of. The Enemies of our Religion are ſenſible of the Advantage they have got over us; and they will not fail to improve it. Stand faſt therefore in the Faith of the Goſpel. We beſeech you not to forſake a Cauſe, that is ſo reaſonable, and of ſo happy a Tendency; that is the Comfort and Joy of the World; that was confirmed by the greateſt Miracles; that was ſealed with the Blood of ſo many Martyrs. Conſider at the ſame Time, the Extravagance and Miſery of *Enthuſiaſm*, the corrupted Springs from which it flows, and the terrible Effects it produces; and above all, how difficult it is for a Man to be cured, when once he is infected with it. It is in vain to offer to reaſon with him. His firſt and great Concern is, to be continually upon his Guard againſt Reaſon. He ſtarts and flies away from you, at the ſingle mentioning of the Word. And as for Scripture, he explains and applies *that* according to his own Fancy, and the wild Impreſſions that are made upon his Mind. So that without a Miracle, or ſome extraordinary Change, as to his Temper, Circumſtances or Condition, he cannot be brought to a ſound Mind. Do you regard the Glory of

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GOD, and the Cauſe and Intereſt of Religion and Virtue? Watch againſt *Enthuſiaſm*. What Madneſs is it to expoſe your ſelves to a Miſery, from which it is next to impoſſible to recover your ſelves! What monſtrous Opinions have *Enthuſiaſts* embraced and propagated? What dreadful Confuſion and Miſchief have they begotten in the World? How ſhamefully, how horribly have many of them finiſhed their Lives!

But at the ſame Time that you condemn and ſhun the Errors of Infidels and Enthuſiaſts, take Care that you do not act from the ſame Principles, that influence and govern them; take Care that your Inclinations, your Paſſions, and your Deſigns are not as wicked and fooliſh as theirs are. The Infidel contemns and ridicules the ſacred Oracles, becauſe they contradict his Prejudices, they croſs his darling Luſts, they condemn his Purpoſes, and threaten him with Miſery. Let me ask you, Do you not act from the ſame Principles? Whom do you love moſt; GOD, or your ſelves? Whoſe Will do you obey, the Will of GOD, or your own Will? In what do you take moſt Pleaſure; in finding out the Truth, or in gratifying your ſelves with idle Amuſements? Whoſe Intereſt do you purſue with the greateſt Zeal, that of the Publick, or your own private Intereſt? What Difference then is there between you and Infidels? The one confeſſes what he is, and acts accordingly. But you deny what you are, and contradict yourſelves. Both of you are led and guided by your Luſts and Paſſions.

Are not you likewiſe governed by the ſame Principles that animate Enthuſiaſts? They are wild and extravagant; are not you ſo too? They are ignorant, proud, conceited, Deſpiſers of others, Haters of Reaſon and Soberneſs; are not you the ſame! Could I perſwade you, that you may be inſpired, that you may be enabled to work wonderful Miracles, you would

would be all Attention, you would hear me with Joy and Rapture. But I tell you, in the Name of the LORD, that you may be inſpired, that you may perform wonderful Miracles, and yet be ruined and undone at laſt. *Though you ſpeak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, and have not Charity, you are nothing.* Charity, Love to GOD and Men, thro' JESUS CHRIST, manifeſting it ſelf in Acts of ſolid Piety, and unfeigned and univerſal Beneficence, is of infinitely greater Value, than all the miraculous Gifts ſpoken of in the Goſpel. To heal the Sick, to foretell Things to come, to raiſe the Dead, to make the Sun ſtand ſtill, all theſe Things are not once to be compared to this Grace. Nothing ſo beneficial to Mankind, ſo ornamental to humane Nature, ſo much reſembling the greateſt and beſt of Beings, as Charity! 'Tis in the Heart that this Principle reigns. It is made up of Patience, Submiſſion, Meekneſs, Humility, Sweetneſs, Kindneſs, Beneficence. It's Joys are the Joys of Truth. It's greateſt Felicity is to ſee Righteouſneſs and Happineſs prevailing amongſt the Children of Men.

In the Name of GOD then, *my dear Brethren*, forſake your unreaſonable & wicked Thoughts and Ways. Remember that you are Men and Chriſtians. Diligently and impartially ſearch for the Truth. Be convinced of the Divinity of the holy Scriptures. Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as he is in them ſet forth to you. Cultivate and cheriſh a ſtrong ſteady, and maſculine Religion. Depend upon GOD for the continual and efficacious Aids & Aſſiſtances of his Holy Spirit. Be frequent and earneſt in your Supplications to the Throne of divine Grace.

Now to the eternal and inexhauſtible Fountain and Author of Light and Wiſdom, of Truth and Reaſon, of Religion and Virtue, Peace and Joy be all Power, Dominion and Glory, for ever and ever. AMEN.

FINIS.

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